



**MEROLA
OPERA PROGRAM**

**TWENTY-NINE YOUNG ARTISTS FROM
FOUR COUNTRIES AND ACROSS THE U.S. PRESENT
MEROLA OPERA PROGRAM'S 61st SEASON
2018 SUMMER FESTIVAL INCLUDES STAGED OPERAS, SCENES CONCERT, GRAND
FINALE**

July 5 – August 18, 2018

Performances in San Francisco and Palo Alto

SAN FRANCISCO, CA (27 March 2018) – San Francisco's acclaimed **Merola Opera Program**, one of the most prestigious and selective opera training programs in the world, launches its 61st season offering audiences a look at the opera stars of tomorrow. The 2018 Merola Summer Festival will present this year's 29 Merola artists, selected from more than 800 international applicants, in the **Schwabacher Summer Concert** (July 5 & 7), Mozart's *Il re pastore* (July 19 & 21), Stravinsky's *The Rake's Progress* (August 2 & 4), concluding with the **Merola Grand Finale** (August 18). The 2018 Merola Summer Festival includes performances in San Francisco and Palo Alto. Individual event tickets and information available at www.merola.org or 415-864-3330.

Schwabacher Summer Concert – July 5 & 7

Some of opera's greatest moments will come to life as Merola's young artists perform staged scenes from *Vanessa*, *Il tabarro*, *Don Giovanni*, and *Les pêcheurs de perles* in the **Schwabacher Summer Concert**. *Vanessa*, a three-act American opera by Samuel Barber follows Vanessa and Erika, two women torn between fighting for ideals and settling for what life has to offer. *Il tabarro* (*The Cloak*) is a one-act opera by Puccini, based on Didier Gold's play *La houppelande*. Mozart's *Don Giovanni* brings to life the infamous seducer. Rounding out the program is a selection from Bizet's *Les pêcheurs de perles* (*The Pearl Fishers*), the story of two men's vow of eternal friendship, threatened by their love for the same woman. With performances in English, Italian, and French (with supertitles), the **Schwabacher Summer Concert** will be conducted by Kathleen Kelly (Merola 1991/1992), the first woman and first American named as Director of Musical Studies at the Vienna State Opera. Kelly returns to San Francisco's Merola Opera Program where she was an apprentice coach. It will be directed by Aria Umezawa (Merola 2016), currently completing her second year as a San Francisco Opera Adler Fellow – the first stage director awarded this fellowship in 15 years. *The Schwabacher Summer Concert* will be presented 7:30pm, July 5 at the San Francisco Conservatory of Music and 7:30pm, July 7 at Bing Concert Hall, Stanford.

Il re pastore – July 19 & 21

Next, the talented artists will present Mozart's *Il re pastore*. This exquisite early work, which features a string of transcendent arias, explores the competing pulls of love and duty as a young shepherd finds he must renounce his true love in order to reclaim his lost throne. The Merola

artists will bring to life this opera's dazzling melodies and high spirits in a fully stage production. Performances will be conducted by Stephen Stubbs, a leading figure in the American early music scene and winner of a Grammy Award for Best Opera Recording in 2015 for Charpentier: *La descente d'Orphée aux enfers*, and directed by Tara Faircloth (Merola 2006), who is in demand at regional houses including Wolf Trap Opera, Utah Opera, Arizona Opera, Tulsa Opera, and Atlanta Opera, and has directed two world premieres with the Houston Grand Opera's East+West series. *Il re pastore* will be performed 7:30pm, July 19 and 2pm, July 21 at the San Francisco Conservatory of Music.

The Rake's Progress – August 2 & 4

Merola begins August with ***The Rake's Progress***, an opera in three acts and epilogue by Igor Stravinsky, performed by Merola artists. Based loosely on the eponymous eight paintings and engravings by William Hogarth (1733-1735), Stravinsky's lively tale follows the decline and fall of a profligate heir who makes a devil's bargain with Nick Shadow, abandoning life in the country and his tender fiancée for the wicked temptations of London. Stravinsky's intricate score and W.H. Auden and Chester Kallman's brilliant libretto offer the Merola artists an exciting challenge. ***The Rake's Progress*** will be conducted by Mark Morash (Merola 1987) and directed by Robin Guarino. Morash is currently the Director of Musical Studies at the San Francisco Opera Center. Film and opera director Guarino has staged lauded productions at the Metropolitan Opera, as well as Seattle Opera, Glimmerglass Opera, Julliard Opera Center, and many more. ***The Rake's Progress*** will be performed 7:30pm, August 2 and 2pm, August 4, at the San Francisco Conservatory of Music.

Merola Grand Finale – August 18

The Summer Festival concludes August 18 with the **Merola Grand Finale**, a concert at the War Memorial Opera House featuring the 29 young artists of the 2018 Merola Opera Program, who will showcase a dazzling array of opera's most exciting arias and ensembles. Conducted by Dean Williamson, the acclaimed conductor now completing his third season as music director at Nashville Opera, and directed by 2018 Merola Apprentice Stage Director Marcus Shields, this evening showcases the hard work and burgeoning talent of the Merolini. ***The Merola Grand Finale*** will be presented 7:30pm, Saturday, August 18 at the War Memorial Opera House. *Following the performance, join the Merola artists for a celebration in the Veterans Building Green Room (separate ticket required).*

The **Merola Opera Program** is widely regarded as the foremost opera training program for aspiring singers, coach accompanists, and stage directors. Merola nurtures the opera stars of tomorrow, and presents outreach through educational programs for students and the general public. Throughout the summer, the Merola artists participate in master classes and private coaching with opera's most accomplished singers, conductors, and directors. Participants also receive training in operatic repertory, foreign languages, diction, acting, and stage movement. Offered free of charge for all participants, the Merola Opera Program is unique in the industry in many ways. It is the only young artist program to provide financial support to developing artists for five years following participation, offering financial aid for essential career development costs including coaching, language classes, and audition travel. In addition, only

Merola graduates are considered for participation in the San Francisco Opera Adler Fellowship Program. Merola has served as a proving ground for hundreds of artists, who have gone on to extensive careers in opera, including Leona Mitchell, Anna Netrebko, Patricia Racette, Carol Vaness, Deborah Voigt, Joyce DiDonato, Susan Graham, Dolora Zajick, Rolando Villazon, Thomas Hampson, and Patrick Summers among many others.

This year's Merola Opera Program artists include:

Sopranos

Kendra Berentsen, *Portland, Oregon*
Cheyanne Coss, *Eaton Rapids, Michigan*
Marlen Nahhas, *Houston, Texas*
Brittany Nickell, *Coral Springs, Florida*
Patricia Westley, *Santa Barbara, California*
Meigui Zhang, *Chengdu, China*

Mezzo-sopranos

Megan Grey, *Cedar Falls, Iowa*
Anne Maguire, *Washougal, Washington*
Simone McIntosh, *Vancouver, B.C., Canada*
Alexandra Urquiola, *Bergenfield, New Jersey*

Tenors

Zhengyi Bai, *Linyi, Shandong, China*
Christopher Colmenero, *Burlington, Vermont*
Addison Marlor, *Salt Lake City, Utah*
Brian Michael Moore, *Cincinnati, Ohio*
Christopher Oglesby, *Woodstock, Georgia*
Charles Sy, *Mississauga, Ontario, Canada*
WooYoung Yoon, *Seoul, South Korea*

Baritones

SeokJong Baek, *Jeon-Ju, South Korea*
Jacob Scharfman, *Boston, Massachusetts*
Jaeman Yoon, *Seoul, South Korea*
Xiaomeng Zhang, *Wenzhou, China*

Bass-Baritones

Andrew Moore, *Point Pleasant, New Jersey*
Ted Pickell, *El Dorado Hills, California*

Apprentice Coaches

Kseniia Polstiankina Barrad, *Kyiv, Ukraine*
Annie Brooks, *Seattle, Washington*
Matthew Gemmill, *Ames, Iowa*
James Maverick, *Baton Rouge, Louisiana*
Thomas Morris, *Atlanta, Georgia*

Apprentice Stage Director

Marcus Shields, *Charleston, South Carolina*

FOR CALENDAR EDITORS:

WHAT: San Francisco's acclaimed **Merola Opera Program**, one of the most prestigious and selective opera training programs in the world, launches its 61st season offering audiences a look at the opera stars of tomorrow. The 2018 Merola Summer Festival will present this year's 29 Merola artists, selected from more than 800 international applicants, in the **Schwabacher Summer Concert**, Mozart's *Il re pastore*, and Stravinsky's *The Rake's Progress*, concluding with the **Merola Grand Finale**.

WHEN: **Schwabacher Summer Concert:**
7:30pm, Thursday, July 5 – San Francisco Conservatory of Music

San Francisco tickets: \$35-\$55

7:30pm, Saturday, July 7 – Bing Concert Hall, Stanford University
Palo Alto tickets: \$30-\$50

Il re pastore

7:30pm, Thursday, July 19 – San Francisco Conservatory of Music
2:00pm, Saturday, July 21 – San Francisco Conservatory of Music
San Francisco tickets: \$55-\$80

The Rake's Progress

7:30pm, Thursday, August 2 – San Francisco Conservatory of Music
2:00pm, Saturday, August 4 – San Francisco Conservatory of Music
San Francisco tickets: \$55-\$80

Merola Grand Finale

7:30pm, Saturday, August 18 – War Memorial Opera House
San Francisco tickets: \$25-\$50
Reception tickets: \$75

WHERE: **San Francisco Conservatory of Music**, 50 Oak St., San Francisco
Bing Concert Hall, Stanford University, 327 Lasuen St., Stanford
War Memorial Opera House, 301 Van Ness Ave., San Francisco

TICKETS: Tickets for all San Francisco performances go on sale to Merola members Monday, April 2 and to the public Monday, April 16. Tickets for the Schwabacher Summer Concert at Bing Concert Hall go on sale May 24.

Discount available for purchase of three San Francisco-based Summer Festival productions (deadline June 18, 2018). Also discount for groups of 10 or more. \$15 student tickets available in limited quantity in advance at San Francisco Opera Box Office.

INFO: For information or to order tickets visit <http://merola.org> or call the San Francisco Opera Box Office at **415-864-3330**. The box office is open Monday, 10am-5pm, and Tuesday through Friday, 10am-6pm. Tickets for Bing Concert Hall are sold through Stanford Live at 650-724-2464 or in person at 327 Lasuen Street, Stanford University.

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PHOTOS: Downloadable high-res photos will be available here:
<http://www.cbpr.co/press/MerolaOperaProgram>